

Application No. 10/517,509
Paper Dated: November 10, 2010
In Reply to USPTO Correspondence of September 29, 2010
Attorney Docket No. 0470-045922

REMARKS

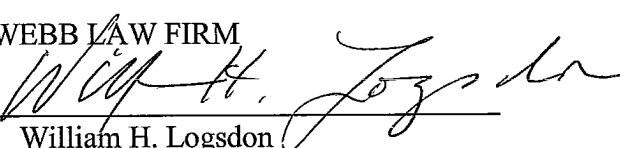
According to the Notice of Panel Decision from Pre-Appeal Brief Review dated September 29, 2010, the rejections asserted in the Office Action dated March 31, 2010 have been withdrawn and a Notice of Allowance will be mailed. During an interview with the Examiner, the Examiner requested that claim 28 be amended to include the limitations of recited in claim 34. Applicants have amended claim 28 accordingly. Thus, claim 28 is directed to a method of treating or reducing a risk of developing vaginal dryness, wherein the method comprises applying to the vaginal epithelium a composition containing estetrol or a precursor of estetrol. The recited precursors of estetrol can be used by employing well-known techniques for derivatization of steroids, for example, producing esters of estetrol. It is well-known in the art of steroid chemistry that esters of hydroxyl containing steroids are metabolized *in vivo* to yield the free steroid. Estradiol valerate and estradiol acetate, for instance, are commercially available estrogens that are hydrolyzed *in vivo* to yield the well-known estrogen estradiol. A person of ordinary skill in the art would expect that estetrol esters to behave in a comparable fashion. For this reason, Applicants respectfully request that claim 28, which includes such precursors of estetrol, be allowed.

Additionally, Applicants respectfully request that the withdrawn claims be rejoined. To this end, Applicants have amended withdrawn claim 31 to recite estetrol and precursors of estetrol as recited in claim 28.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that claims 24, 26, 28, 32 and 33 be allowed. Applicants further request that withdrawn claims 17, 21-23, 25, 27 and 29-31 be rejoined and allowed.

Respectfully submitted,

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